

A Progressive Approach to Police Preparedness for Demonstrations & Assemblies

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THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE (CACP) has endorsed a unified approach for police services in responding to demonstrations and assemblies, as developed by the Policing with Indigenous Peoples Committee (PWIP). The committee, which was formed to consider matters relating to sustainable policing service and enhanced public safety for Indigenous peoples and communities

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assemblies.

The approach was developed in the wake of several critical events involving conflict between the police and Indigenous peoples and communities, including the widely recognized crises that have occurred in Oka, Rexton, Ipperwash and Caledonia. Through these critical events, police services have learned several significant lessons pertaining to a measured response to all demonstrations and assemblies. The inquiries, recommendations and analyses that followed these critical events aimed to improve police responses. *The National Framework for Police Preparedness for Demonstrations and Assemblies* (the National Framework) is a culmination of decades of work on the part of many police services that is intended to ensure continued situational awareness in support of a measured response to large-scale events. The National Framework is considered a best practices document that addresses issue-based conflicts; it is not limited to only those issues impacting Indigenous peoples or communities.

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Purpose of the National Framework

- To promote an operationally sound, informed and flexible approach to resolving conflict and managing crises in a consistent manner;
- To promote an approach that demonstrates accommodation and mutual respect of differences, positions and interests of all involved Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and stakeholders;
- To promote an approach to demonstrations that seeks to understand and respect unique cultural elements, particularly with respect to issues impacting Indigenous peoples and communities; and,
- To promote and develop strategies that minimize the need for use of force by police.

Foundational principles of the National Framework:

1. Measured approach
2. Relationship building
3. Facilitating lawful, peaceful & safe demonstrations
4. Impartiality
5. Stages of conflict
6. Interoperability
7. Education before enforcement

The National Framework was developed through research and consultation with

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included recognition of the critical importance of education and building trusting

relationships. Overwhelmingly, stakeholders identified education and awareness of Indigenous culture as essential.

The National Framework provides a foundational piece that police services can rely on to build policies within their respective organizations. The hope is that police services will adopt the tenets of the National Framework while engaging in meaningful consultation with Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to tailor policies to their needs, ensuring that documents that are produced are flexible and reflective of local community differences. This approach is dialogue-based and outlines factors involved in providing a flexible police response within each stage of the conflict cycle; pre, during and post. Issue-related conflict is oftentimes avoidable; the benefits of the National Framework are maximized if implemented early in the conflict cycle, prior to an issue requiring a police response.

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THE LIAISON APPROACH

Since 2007, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) have been following a similar approach and in 2009, the OPP Provincial Liaison Team (PLT) was formed as a key resource, confirming organizational confidence in effective communication and informed liaison between the police and involved persons, groups and communities as being necessary and beneficial when responding to a wide range of events and circumstances.

The RCMP has been using a Proactive Engagement approach since the 1990s. In recent years this has evolved to be known as the "Measured Approach," referenced and outlined in the National Framework. The RCMP entrenched the approach in 2015, with the creation of the Divisional Liaison Team (DLT).

Liaison Teams are a key part of police planning and response to major events and

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transparent lines of communication with all stakeholders who might be affected, directly or indirectly, by major events. By relying on effective negotiation and mediation

techniques and ensuring to dialogue and work with all those affected by an event, liaison intervention is a successful means to communicate and avoid conflict.

"When Idle No More began, we had thousands of First Nations people travelling to Ottawa to join us in protests on Parliament Hill. The Ontario Provincial Police worked effectively with us women who organized to ensure safe journeys and family friendly spaces. Our events often include disabled Elders, youth and children of all ages. It is important to us to provide safe settings for the massive demonstrations or marches through various cities and towns. Due to timely notification of our plans, we received considerable support from Provincial Liaison Team members. We recommend you do so too."

—Lynda Kitchikeesic, Idle No More Ontario

THE LIAISON TRAINING COURSE

Municipal and First Nations police services from across Canada have taken advantage of both the RCMP and OPP specialized liaison training. Having trained officers responsible for ensuring informed liaison and effective communication with involved and affected parties in a conflict situation has proven to be beneficial. A shared policing approach and training are particularly effective when demonstrations and events involve multiple jurisdictions and require joint policing.

Along with the roll-out of the National Framework, the CACP PWIP developed liaison course training standards and hosted a pilot *Liaison Officer Training Course* in November 2019. Several internal and external relationships were key in gaining

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participants represented eighteen police services from across Canada.

The intensive, eight-day program focused on building and maintaining trusting relationships and establishing open and effective communication, as well as negotiation and mediation skills. The learning was supplemented through the use of multiple case studies and scenario-based learning. The goal of this training is to allow police services the opportunity to join in a broad community of practice.



APPLICATION OF THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

As multijurisdictional demonstrations are occurring with greater frequency, it is beneficial to have a National Framework and consistent liaison approach that can be utilized within a broad context. With recent media articles calling 2019 the "Year of the Street Protestor," the release of such a framework is timely. The proliferation of social media, the rise and reach of discontented youth activists, and increasingly polarized viewpoints have resulted in a greater likelihood of conflict; thereby enhancing the need for police services to have trained liaison members able to build relationships to work with in times of crisis. Further, global issues can have local consequences where police across Canada may be responding to demonstrations in multiple areas in relation to the same issue. Police as a whole are bound by services and borders, while those

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The nature of protests and demonstrations are becoming increasingly complex. For instance, a new generation of activism has emerged over natural resources issues, which acts as a point of convergence at which issues impacting Indigenous peoples and environmentalists intersect. Public unrest and dissatisfaction with various issues, including politics and economics is significant. The method of demonstrations has also become increasingly complex with the proliferation of social media allowing demonstrators to quickly and efficiently mobilize. As such, police need to be fluid and adapt responses to the activities of demonstrators in order to minimize impact to the community at large.

An important piece in the Framework deals with the idea that the divide between police and demonstrators should be narrowed in order to create a mutual understanding of the need to work together to ensure demonstrations and assemblies are peaceful, safe and lawful.

A growing number of policing agencies are adopting the principles and practices of the National Framework approach as a proactive component of police response to issue-based conflict. The CACP hopes that this approach and the liaison team model and training will continue to be adopted by police services across Canada. Additional information may be found at bit.ly/CACP_PWIP.

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